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Reading-Tutors Overview

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Rationale

One of the biggest obstacles to running a

successful tutoring or mentoring program is providing volunteer tutors with developmentally appropriate materials - materials that address a child's specific learning needs. Volunteer tutors can be recruited, trained, and assigned a child to tutor, but lacking the appropriate instructional materials, the tutor session often falls short of its goal to advance the learner along the path to literacy.

Providing convenient, well-organized, and educationally sound tutoring resources for reading was the driving force behind development of Reading-Tutors materials. The Web site supplies teachers, parents, tutors, and tutor coordinators with effective reading

strategies and an extensive collection of printable, research-based materials. It gives tutors the tools they need to help emerging readers become skilled readers.

We recognize that teachers, tutor coordinators, and private tutors have difficulty finding the time to identify and gather the appropriate resources needed for each tutoring/mentoring session. The limited materials that are available to tutors often lack accompanying lesson plans or instructions. When instructions do exist, they are generally written for trained and certified teachers, not volunteer tutors.

Reading-Tutors pulls it all together -- books, lesson plans, teaching materials, and assessments. Everything needed for an effective tutoring session is in a downloadable file that can be accessed with the click of a mouse. Just locate the resource category that addresses a child's developmental needs and download, print, and assemble the packets. When tutors show up to tutor children, they are given packets containing instructions and materials designed to help the children learn to read.

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Tutoring/Mentoring Materials

You will find three types of materials on the Reading-Tutors Web site:

[Instructional Resource Packets](#) (each packet contains materials for a tutoring session)

[Assessments](#)

[Tutor Program Resources](#)

Instructional Resource Packets

Reading-Tutors resource packets are organized into six instructional categories. Each category addresses skills and strategies that reading experts have defined as keys to developing successful readers. The categories are:

Alphabet

Twenty-six packets, each covering a specific letter of the alphabet. Each packet consists of a lesson page for the tutor, an alphabet song sheet, a large letter card, an alphabet chant, handwriting sheets, picture cards, an alphabet letter book, and an alphabet game.

Packets are available in either D'Nealian or Zaner-Bloser writing style.

Phonological Awareness

Thirty packets devoted to teaching critical phonological awareness skills--including word, rhyme, onset and rime, syllable, and phoneme. Each packet includes a lesson page for the tutor, templates for making picture cards, a game, and a read-aloud book for developing awareness of sounds.

Phonics

Fifty-three lesson packets, each

covering a specific sound/symbol relationship--including consonants, vowels, blends, digraphs, diphthongs, and variant vowels. Each packet contains a two-part lesson for the tutor along with picture and letter card templates, a workmat, a practice sheet, a decodable book, and a game.

High-Frequency Words

Twenty-four lesson packets covering the top 69 high-frequency words. Each packet contains a lesson page for the tutor, high-frequency word flashcard

template, worksheet, a high-frequency word book, and a game.

Fluency

One hundred twenty-six packets designed to improve reading rate and intonation. Each packet contains a lesson sheet for the tutor, two reading passages, a graph, a word game, and cards.

Comprehension (Leveled Readers)

One hundred thirty-five packets designed to promote comprehension. Each lesson uses a book written to one of 27 levels of difficulty. Each packet contains

a lesson sheet for the tutor, a leveled reading book, a graphic organizer, and a vocabulary game.

Assessments

Reading-Tutors includes a comprehensive collection of quick-check assessments that can be used to diagnose a child's reading weaknesses or monitor a child's progress. Multiple assessments are available for each of the six instructional categories.

Tutor Program Resources

In addition to the assessments and resource packets designed for use during tutoring sessions, Reading-Tutors houses many other resources that can be used to build a successful tutoring program, recruit tutors, train tutors, and keep a tutor program running smoothly. There are forms for tracking and reporting on tutoring sessions, certificates to show appreciation and recognize performance, and labels for the packets. There are also handouts to help tutors learn teaching strategies and the dos and don'ts of tutoring.

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Research-Based Criteria

Reading-Tutors instructional resources are based on what research has identified as best practices. The skills taught using Reading-Tutors resources have been identified by the National Reading Panel as key skills needed to build reading fluency and comprehension. Most importantly, research states that repeated practice

with developmentally appropriate materials contributes significantly to the development of good readers. Tutoring sessions provide the opportunity for repeated practice, and Reading-Tutors places developmentally appropriate materials in the hands of tutors so each session can be a valuable learning experience. A summary of the research findings for each instructional category and how Reading-Tutors addresses these skills follows.

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Comprehension (Leveled Reading)

Alphabet

Research says:

After phonemic awareness, recognition of the letters of the alphabet is the most important indicator of early reading success.

Reading-Tutors offers:

Effective alphabet instruction involves teaching the naming, recognition, and formation of the 26 uppercase and lowercase letter symbols used to form

every word in the English language.

Phonological Awareness

Research says:

Phonological awareness, along with phonemic awareness, is the most important determinant of reading success. Students with a command of phoneme awareness skills read and spell more effectively than students lacking these skills. Effective strategies include teaching students to: identify a particular sound in a word; recognize the same sound in different words; recognize one

word that begins or ends with a different sound from a group of three or four words; segment and blend the sounds in a word; and manipulate sounds in a word through deletion, addition, and substitution of other sounds. Students who have difficulty hearing the sounds of language will have more difficulty relating sounds to the written words they read.

Reading-Tutors offers:

Phonological awareness addresses the sounds of language. It does not teach the symbols that represent sounds, but rather the sounds alone.

Reading-Tutors phonological awareness

materials--lesson plans, picture cards, games, and read-aloud books--are geared toward key pre-reading strategies: identifying, recognizing, and manipulating particular sounds in words.

Phonics

Research says:

A phonics program must contain two elements--systematic instruction and opportunity for practice--in order to lead to real reading results.

Reading-Tutors offers:

This systematic phonics program teaches developing readers the relationship between sounds and symbols (letters of the alphabet).

Reading-Tutors lessons and decodable books cover specific sound-symbol relationships, beginning with single letter sound/symbol relationships and progressing toward more complex relationships, such as consonant and vowel digraphs. The activities--picture and letter cards, worksheets, and games--offer abundant opportunities for practice in manipulating sounds and symbols to form words.

High-Frequency Words

Research says:

Experts claim that 100 words make up about 50 percent of all the words we read. Many of these words are not decodable. Their frequent use requires instant recognition in order to build fluency. Direct and explicit instruction that introduces and practices these high-frequency words can lead to improved reading performance.

Reading-Tutors offers:

Reading-Tutors offers a systematic program to introduce high-frequency words through direct and explicit

instruction. Children are introduced to these words, beginning with the most common, and provided with an opportunity to practice them using flashcards and books that teach new high-frequency words and review previously taught words.

Fluency

Research says:

Repeated reading of familiar passages, along with timing and plotting reading rate on a graph to show students their progress, can lead to improved fluency.

Fluency in turn leads to comprehension, as it directs student energy from reading words to comprehending the words read.

Reading-Tutors offers:

Fluent readers read words as whole units. They do not consume their reading 'energy' trying to sound out words. Their efforts are focused on comprehending what they read rather than figuring out individual words as isolated text.

Reading-Tutors provides passages for repeated oral reading. Each packet contains a graph so that each time a student reads a passage while the tutor times the reading, she or he is told to record the reading rate. This strategy has

been shown to improve fluency and overall reading comprehension.

Comprehension (Leveled Reading)

Research says:

Reading experts suggest that targeting key reading/comprehension strategies will ensure that students obtain meaning from the text they read. Providing students with developmentally appropriate materials that they can read repeatedly builds reading and comprehension skills needed by all successful readers.

Reading-Tutors offers:

Comprehension involves thinking about what has been read. Most reading experts agree that the thought processes and strategies involved in comprehending text can and should be taught directly and explicitly.

Reading-Tutors materials--leveled books, graphic organizers, and games--stress key comprehension strategies as well as vocabulary building. They guide students in connecting what is read to prior experience, generating and answering questions, monitoring comprehension, recognizing story structure, summarizing ideas in text, practicing visualization and imagery, and

using graphic organizers. In addition, since the books in the comprehension packets can be reproduced so inexpensively, students can take home a copy of the book used in a tutoring session for repeated reading practice.

Reading-Tutors has been extensively piloted in 12 tutoring programs in northwest Ohio. The pilot programs began using the early versions of Reading-Tutors resources during the 2003-2004 school year. Feedback from the pilot sites was essential to fine-tuning the tutor materials and designing additional resources needed. Further independent research is underway to validate the program's effectiveness.

This research is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Rich Wilson, co-director of the Center for Evaluation Services at Bowling Green State University.